

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-11 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01 DHA-02 ORM-02 FEA-01 OMB-01

EB-07 /100 W

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R 131631Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5135

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION USUN NY

USCINCEUR

CINCUSNAVEUR

FOSIF ROTA

COMSIXTHFLT

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 0351

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS PBOR PFOR MR SS MO AG

SUBJECT: SAHARA WATCH: MAURITANIAN DEVELOPMENTS

SUMMARY: MAURITANIAN MILITARY SITUATION HAS IMPROVED AT BOTH
AUSERT IN WESTERN SAHARA AND BIR MOGHREIN INSIDE MAURITANIA.
GIRM SECURITY FORCES ARE MORE OPTIMISTIC IN SPITE OF LOSS OF TWO
SMALL VILLAGES ALONG BORDER WITH MALI. ALGERIA CONTINUES TO PUT
PRESSURE ON GIRM, MOST RECENTLY BY CUTTING OFF SUPPLY OF GAS-OIL
TO MAURITANIA. END SUMMARY.

1. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS. SPANISH DIPLOMAT, WHOSE INFORMATION
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COMES FROM MAURITANIAN MILITARY SOURCES, TELLS US THERE HAS BEEN

IMPROVEMENT IN MAURITANIAN MILITARY SITUATION AT BOTH AUSERT AND BIR MOGHREIN IN PAST SEVERAL DAYS. ABOUT WEEK AGO, MAURITANIAN CAPT. JING NHADIROU WAS KILLED BY MORTAR SHELL AT AUSERT. ALTHOUGH SOME SIXTY POLISARIO REMAIN IN VICINITY OF AUSERT AND CONTINUE TO LOB OCCASIONAL SHELLS INTO VILLAGE, GIRM HAS SITUATION UNDER CONTROL. NATIONAL GENDARMERIE COMMANDER, LT. COL. VIAH OULD MAYOUF, IS IN COMMAND OF MAURITANIAN FORCES AT AUSERT. ALL MOROCCAN FORCES HAVE LEFT AUSERT. SITUATION AT BIR MOGHREIN HAS STABILIZED TO SOME EXTENT. POLISARIO FORCES OUTSIDE BIR REPORTEDLY HAVE BEEN PUSHED BACK SUFFICIENTLY SO THAT MOROCCANS ARE NO LONGER AFRAID TO BRING THEIR F-5S INTO AREA. SPANIARD SAID HE HAS NO CONFIRMATION, HOWEVER, THAT ANY F-5S HAVE ACTUALLY BEEN IN VICINITY OF BIR IN RECENT DAYS. IN SPITE OF LOSS OF SMALL VILLAGES IN NORTHEASTERN MAURITANIA ALONG MALI BORDER, GIRM SECURITY FORCES ARE MORE CONFIDENT ABOUT MILITARY SITUATION. SPANISH DIPLOMAT ALSO AMPLIFIED ON EARLIER REPORT CONCERNING MAURITANIAN EVACUATION OF 'AIN BEN TILI LAST MONTH. DURING HURRIED DEPARTURE FROM 'AIN BEN TILI, GIRM LOST NUMBER OF VEHICLES AND KEY WEAPONS TO POLISARIO, ALLEGEDLY AS RESULT OF MALFEASANCE BY OFFICERS. ACTION IS NOW UNDER WAY TO REDUCE IN RANK A MAURITANIAN CAPTAIN, LIEUTENANT, AND SERGEANT WHO WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR THESE MATERIEL LOSSES.

2. ALGERIA CUTS OFF GAS-OIL. AS PART OF ITS CONTINUING CAMPAIGN TO PUT PRESSURE ON GIRM, ALGERIA CUT OFF DELIVERY OF GAS-OIL TO MAURITANIA ABOUT ONE WEEK AGO WITHOUT FOREWARNING AND DESPITE EXISTENCE OF VALID CONTRACTS WITH SOCIETE NATIONALE INDUSTRIELLE ET MINIERE. HIGH-LEVEL BP DELEGATION, WHICH JUST COMPLETED VISIT TO MAURITANIA, HAS CONFIRMED THAT IT WILL PICK UP SLACK. BP HAS GAS-OIL SUPPLY CONTRACT FOR IRON ORE OPERATION. UNDER THIS CONTRACT, BP DELIVERS SUBSTANTIAL QUANTITIES OF GAS-OIL TO NOUADHIBOU ON REGULAR BASIS FROM ITS REFINERIES IN EUROPE. FISHING FLEET OPERATING OUT OF NOUADHIBOU REQUIRES SOME 3000 TONS OF GAS-OIL PER MONTH. ACCORDING TO MAURITANIAN BP REP, IT WILL BE SIMPLE MATTER FOR BP TO ADD 3000 EXTRA TONS TO ITS REGULAR DELIVERIES FROM EUROPE TO NOUADHIBOU. HEAVY TRUCKERS AND HEAVY EQUIPMENT OPERATORS IN NOUAKCHOTT USE ABOUT 800 TONS OF GAS-OIL EVERY TWO WEEKS. BP PLANS TO ADD THAT QUANTITY OF GAS-OIL TO ITS TWICE MONTHLY TANKER DELIVERIES FROM SENEGAL TO NOUAKCHOTT WHARF.

3. COMMENT: MAURITANIAN MILITARY ACTIVITY CONTINUES AT
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RELATIVELY LOW LEVEL AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS GIVE GIRM SOME REASON FOR OPTIMISM. SPEEDY RESOLUTION OF GAS-OIL CUTOFF ALSO SUGGESTS THAT GIRM IS DEALING WITH DIFFICULTIES IN MORE EFFICIENT MANNER THAN MIGHT BE EXPECTED. FACT REMAINS, HOWEVER, THAT MAURITANIA STILL FACES VXNG-TERM GUERRILLA THREAT IN BOTH ITS PORTION OF SAHARA AS WELL AS IN NORTHERN PART OF MAURITANIA. IT MUST ALSO COME TO GRIPS WITH ADMINISTRATION OF VIRTUAL WELFARE PROVINCE, I.E. WADI DHEHAB.HANDYSIDE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TERRITORIAL CLAIMS, POLITICAL SITUATION, MILITARY CAPABILITIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976NOUAKC00351
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760056-1130
From: NOUAKCHOTT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760251/aaaabsbt.tel
Line Count: 115
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30 MAR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <30 MAR 2004 by greeneet>; APPROVED <03 AUG 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SAHARA WATCH: MAURITANIAN DEVELOPMENTS SUMMARY: MAURITANIAN MILITARY SITUATION HAS IMPROVED AT BOTH
TAGS: MOPS, PBOR, PFOR, MR, SS, MO, AG
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006